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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5175
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 0389
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1396
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 3209
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1219
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 0701
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1114

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 000156

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DEPARTMENT PASS DEA
STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL SNAR PINR HA
SUBJECT: LAMBERT: PARLIAMENT SUPPORTS ACTION AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKERS

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 2477

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The Ambassador raised the question of drug trafficking in Haiti to National Assembly President Joseph Lambert, and he took the opportunity to speak at length about the problem. In a meeting with the Ambassador on January 25, Lambert stated that the Haitian parliament is ready to support GoH action against drug trafficking, provided that DEA will also provide reinforcement. He blames weak institutions, especially during the interim-GoH, for allowing the increase in drug trafficking through Haiti. Lambert noted that drug trafficking intensified between 2002 and 2006, and agreed with the Ambassador's assessment that airplane trafficking had especially increased. Lambert stressed that Haiti is neither a producer nor consumer of drugs, and that drugs are passing through on their way from Colombia and Venezuela to the US and Europe. Since the drugs are transiting through Haiti, the GoH needs improved port, airport and customs control. The GoH does not have the capacity to control the ports and intercept drugs. They need specialized teams and equipment - especially satellites - to track the airplanes, boats and vehicles carrying drugs into and out of the country. Lambert stated that a DEA presence at the ports, airport and in customs could help alleviate the problem. He also cited the need for political will in Haiti to do more than just talk about the drug problem, noting that weak GoH institutions make action difficult.

¶2. (C) Lambert also said he has doubts as to the willingness among the international community, especially the USG, to help the GoH combat drugs. The Ambassador agreed that there is more that we can do and emphasized the need for cooperation between the USG, the GoH, and the Dominican Republic. When the Ambassador mentioned that the GoH has some responsibility in the matter as well, namely via police and judicial reform, several members of the chamber of deputies who were also in attendance, apparently believing that faster reforms were unlikely, laughed at her suggestion.

¶3. (C) Lambert raised the issue of money seized from drug traffickers, and stated that it would be good to have a law specifying what should be done with this money. He suggested a certain percentage of the confiscated money could be designated for infrastructure and other development projects.

Lambert also mentioned the banking sector's role. Money made from drug trafficking is invested into different banks, and banks could help by tracking where the drug money is coming from and where it's going. (Note: The Haitian press reported on the meeting between the Ambassador and Senator Lambert, focusing on the fact that they discussed Haiti's drug trafficking problem. End Note.)

¶4. (C) Comment: Lambert is proving to be a remarkably shrewd politician. He did not raise the subject of drug trafficking himself, being keenly aware that rumors of his own drug connections (ref A) are his Achilles heel. However, when questioned by the Ambassador he was fully prepared to take a proactive, rather than defensive, stance on the issue.

Lambert is also exceedingly smooth, firmly defending the position established by President Preval that the US and other consumer countries must solve Haiti's trafficking problems, but conceding enough of the Ambassador's points to avoid coming across as uncooperative. If his political ambitions remain unchecked, he will at some point have to move beyond talk and draw some clear lines regarding his relationships with other individuals suspected of involvement in the drug trade, most notably his allies in his hometown of Jacmel, including the newly elected mayor, Edwin Zenny.

SANDERSON